

Reading-Large House  
119 Main Street  
Flemington  
Hunterdon County  
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-396

An Addendum to  
George Large House  
119 Main Street  
Flemington, New Jersey  
in HABS Catalog (1941)

HABS  
NJ  
10-FLEM  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## READING-LARGE HOUSE

HABS  
N.J.

10-FLEM.

Address: 119 Main Street, Flemington, Hunterdon County,  
New Jersey

Present Owner: Edwin K. Large

Present Occupant: Edwin K. Large and wife

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement of Significance: One of the most elaborate of the Greek Revival dwellings built in mid-19th century by Mahlon Fisher, designer and master builder.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Original and Subsequent Owners:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Deed Book</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
4/1/1847	88	201	Charles Bartles and Eliza/w	James N. Reading, Esq.
12/23/1856	117	85	James N. Reading	John G. Reading and Sarah C.A./w
2/15/1870	145	381	John G. Reading	John N. Voorhees
2/14/1900	257	274	Hanna M. Voorhees Anna R. V. Cotter William A. Cotter Henry M. Voorhees	George H. Large

B. Date of Erection: 1847.

C. Builder: Mahlon Fisher.

D. Notes on Original Plan and Construction of Building: Originally rectangular in plan with large portico on the east elevation and a smaller porch on the west elevation. Early map of Flemington shows the "Colonel James Reading" house and a small rectangular building to the rear (probably a part of the existing office structure).

E. Notes on Known Alterations and Additions: The two-story rear wing was added c. 1900. Several additions have been made to the original office building, extending it in a westerly direction. The interior of the dwelling has undergone only very minor changes. In 1854, a masonry vault was constructed in the basement (on the north wall), and it served as the first office of the "Hunterdon Bank."

F. Sources of Information:

Primary and unpublished sources

1. Hunterdon County (New Jersey) Hall of Records. Chain of title extracted from the Deed Books.
2. Hunterdon County (New Jersey) Hall of Records. Agreement for Building #43-1/2. February 13, 1847. (Between George A. Evans and Mahlon Fisher). The Agreement is for a house that Fisher is building for Evans and makes the following reference to the Reading-Large House, apparently under construction at that time: the interior of the Evans House "shall not be inferior to the finish of second floor of said Reading's House."

Secondary and published sources: Plan of Raritan Township, Hunterdon County, surveyed by N. C. Sidney; published in 1850 by Richard Clark. Found in the Hunterdon County Hall of Records.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: One of the most elaborate of the Greek Revival dwellings built in mid-19th century by Mahlon Fisher, designer and master builder. Of particular interest is the richly carved wood adornment found in great abundance on the exterior and to a more limited extent on the interior.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 44'-10" x 43'-9", three stories, five bays, generally L-shaped. Original rectangular main block with later rear addition.
2. Foundations: Stone masonry (cement plaster on exterior). Brick piers under front porch support portico columns. Smaller brick piers also support back porch columns.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: Frame wall construction with brick nogging; flush board siding on the east elevation, clapboard siding on the remaining elevations; painted yellow with white trim. Large wood pilasters at the corners of the main block are painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood frame construction - joists spanning north and south.

M.J.

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5. Porches: Large raised two-story portico on the east elevation with deep entablature and elaborate carved wood cresting above. Fluted wood Ionic columns with richly carved capitals. Smaller raised one-story porch on the west elevation (6'-10" deep) with modern asphalt shingle shed roof.
6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys on the south side - originally one brick chimney on the north side, which was cut off at the third floor level at a later date.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Elaborate Greek Revival main doorway at the center of the east elevation. Double doors with two panels each decorated with palmettes and other Greek Revival details. Doorway, recessed from the plane of the house, has flanking side lights and fixed sash above (three lights over door, one light over each side light). Glass in the side lights is painted in delicate floral designs. Simple Greek Revival architrave with egg and dart molding; frieze above doorway decorated with carved scroll forms, heavy entablature supported by carved wood brackets and topped with a cresting of palmettes. Plain simple Greek Revival doorway at the center of the west (rear) elevation; architrave with three-light fixed sash above and unadorned four-panel double doors. Plain four-panel door in the west elevation of the later wing.
  - b. Windows and shutters:
 

First floor: East elevation - four windows (two on each side of the main doorway)  
North and south elevation - two windows each (at the corners)  
West elevation - three windows (two to the north and one to the south of the door)  
All windows are double-hung wood sash, six-over-six light with simple Greek Revival architrave and two-panel shutters with bar locks. Windows on the north and east elevations have plain frieze above the architrave; entablature supported by two carved wood brackets and surmounted with a cresting of palmettes.

Second floor: Same window arrangement as on the first floor - simple Greek Revival architrave, no entablature; louvered shutters painted black.

Third floor: Decorative iron grills (two on the north, three on the south, four on the west) in the frieze of the main entablature with glass behind serve as windows for the attic spaces.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Main section: Low truncated pyramidal roof (modern asphalt shingles, originally slate) with captain's walk at the center. Richly carved wood cresting on all four elevations of the main block, projects up 6'-0" from the roof at the cornice.
- b. Cornice: Rich Greek Revival entablature on all four sides of the main block with large heavily carved wood cresting above (composed of scrolls, floral designs and a large central palmette with surrounding wreath. Cresting is carved from 2" planks). Simple architrave and frieze separated by an enriched talon molding; decorative iron grills appear in the frieze on the north, south, and west elevations. Cornice composed of egg and dart molding and large cymation supported by carved wood brackets grouped in pairs over each column capital.
- c. Superstructure: Captain's walk at the center of the truncated pyramidal roof - access by ladder from the attic - delicate wood lattice railing topped with carved wood cresting similar in design to cresting at the main cornice.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Basement: Six rooms connected by central hallway; straight run stair to the first floor. Access from flagstone areaways (under the front and rear porches) through four doorways (two on both east and west elevations). Small banking vault (4'-8" x 7'-0") on the north wall. First floor: Central hallway extends from the front to the rear of the main block. One large room to the north and two smaller rooms to the south. Straight run stair to the second floor is located on the south wall of the hallway. Small pantry and kitchen in the modern wing. Second floor: Four rooms at the corners of the main block connected by a central hallway, bathroom at the east end of the hall. Straight run stair to the attic located on the north wall of the southwest room. Floor plan of the new wing not determined. Attic: Large unfinished attic space at the northern end and two smaller finished rooms and a storage room to the south.
2. Stairways: Main stair to the second floor is on the south wall of the central hallway. Straight run, simple early Victorian railing and balusters with decorative foliate scroll string. Simple straight run stair to basement located under main stair; simple straight run stair to the attic located on the north wall of the southwest room on the second floor.

3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster covered with paint and/or paper throughout (with the exception of the large attic space where walls are plastered to sill height and the roof framing is exposed).
4. Doorways and doors: First floor: Elaborate Greek Revival doorway, wide architrave (with slight batter) set on plinth blocks; foliate frieze and cornice of egg and dart and bead moldings. Four-panel doors. Second floor: Plain architrave, two-panel doors. Attic: Simple plank doorway with board and batten doors.
5. Decorative features and trim: Of particular interest, on both the exterior and interior, is the elaborate hand-carved wood adornment applied to door and window assemblies, and to the main cornice on the exterior.
6. Lighting: Modern fixtures.
7. Heating: Modern central heating. Basement: Two brick fireplaces on the south wall, stone hearths. First floor: Northern room - delicately carved wood mantelpiece with arched opening framed in brass, tile hearth; southeast room - marble mantelpiece with crossette and slight batter, rectangular opening, tile hearth. Second floor: Southeast room - wood mantelpiece with crossette and slight batter, rectangular opening framed in tile.

D. Site:

1. Orientation and general setting: Situated on the west side of Main Street in a quiet commercial area.
2. Outbuildings: Small one-story office to the rear of the house. The front part of this office is apparently original, with several extensions added in recent years. Painted yellow with white trim in keeping with the main house.

Prepared by John D. Milner, Architect  
National Park Service  
March 1963